

No 4

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PLAIN AND EARNEST
ADDRESS

TO

BRITONS,

ESPECIALLY

FARMERS,

ON THE

Interesting State of PUBLIC AFFAIRS,

IN

GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE.

By a FARMER.

"When mischief is once begun, there is no knowing when it will end."

WORKS OF T. PAINE.

The NINTH EDITION.

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PLAIN AND EARNEST
ADDRESS.

BROTHER FARMERS,

YOUR attention, has doubtless, been led to a publication called "The Rights of Man," and an Englishman must have a wonderful propensity to confound his friends and his foes, who does not discover in that work a steady and deliberate plan to sap and undermine the happiness and prosperity of Great-Britain. It appears that Mr. PAINE has not only been long actuated by, but that he formerly gloried in avowing, an implacable animosity and rooted hatred to this country; and *that* not merely to its Government, but to its interests, its welfare, its national character, its national honour, its commercial and naval greatness. In violation of his natural allegiance (being born a British subject) he strained every nerve to encrease the animosity subsisting between the Mother-country and her Colonies, and to prevent any accommodation from taking place. His pen was constantly employed during the American war in widening the breach which all good Englishmen sincerely deplored; and in promoting that final separation between England and America, which was then considered as an event the most fatal that could possibly happen to the former Country. Since that period, the unexpected, the unexampled, the daily-increasing prosperity of Great Britain, the harmony, the loyalty, and the happiness of its inhabitants, furnished a disappointment too severe to be endured with any degree of composure. These were scenes which harrowed up the soul of the envious and malignant *Fiend*, who, like his progenitor, bent his course to this Paradise of the globe, ea-
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ger to destroy that felicity which it was not in his nature either to partake of or endure.

But the good sense of the English people is no more to be deluded *by artifice* than their vigour is to be vanquished *by force*. They are not to be persuaded to part with the substance for the shadow. They can distinguish between the sincere and honest advice of rational friends, and the wily ensnaring addresses of insidious foes. They can detect treachery, and defeat malice. They are not so short-sighted as to believe, that in 1792 the man would counsel them to their good, who a few years before was labouring at their destruction. And sensible that under the friendly influence of their most excellent Constitution, and of the happiest possible form of Government, they not only enjoy the greatest degree of personal freedom, as well as of personal security, that can exist in society, but have also risen, within the space of eight years, from penury to affluence, and from deep and accumulated distress to great and unexampled prosperity; rejoiced also that the fruits of these great and manifold advantages have already begun to appear in an alleviation of their burthens, they are not to be induced to stop the career of their greatness, and to replunge into a state of confusion and calamity, worse even than that from which they have so happily emerged.

The fearful events which are at present passing in France, with a rapidity of mischief that surpasses equally all that history has to offer, or fancy to conceive, afford a spectacle interesting to every man who possesses PROPERTY; and to none more than to FARMERS. The quarrel now raging in that once flourishing kingdom, is not between liberty and tyranny, or between protecting and oppressive systems of government; it is, on the contrary, collected to a single point—It is alone a question of property.—It is a trial at arms, whether those who have *nothing* shall not seize and possess the property of those who have *something*. A dreadful question—a horrid struggle—which can never end but in the equal and universal ruin of ALL. In which, he who gains by the loss of his neighbour, gains but to lose, in his turn, to some sturdier robber, till riot and confusion render property but the signal of invasion, and poverty the best shield against the attacks and tyranny of the mob.

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The watch word, from one end of France to the other is **EQUALITY** ; they join liberty with it, as mountebanks annex a favourite epithet to the nostrum, whose only object is the money in the pockets of the credulous. But after all rank, title, nobility, and distinction have been abolished, what do they mean by equality ? The word is absurd if it attaches not to property, for there can be no equality while one man is rich and another poor.

There is information which can be relied on, that the farmers whose occupations are *large*, on comparison with the general size of farms, are under the most abominable oppression ; an arbitrary and despotic mob obliges them to sell their products at a fixed price ; setting the valuation of all provisions at the rates agreeable to their pleasure ; and has, in innumerable instances ; taken the corn brought to market at no price at all. To avoid this injustice, the farmers have abstained from appearing in the markets ; and such a conduct has been punished by fine, imprisonment, and forfeiture ; and decrees have been passed for their expulsion, and dividing their farms among such as have been chosen to seize them. In the levying of taxes, the most abominable transactions have disgraced the kingdom ; while the proprietors of a few acres, who every where form the majority of each municipality, escape all taxation, they are vigilant in forcing every man of more considerable property to pay to the last farthing ; and as all taxes are assessed and levied by parochial vote, at assemblies, to which *all* resort, the men without property order every thing at will, and have various ways, much more effective, for the division of property, than the most direct levelling principle could suggest.

Let the farmers of this kingdom represent to themselves a picture of what their situation would be, if their labourers, their servants, and the paupers whom they support by poor-rates, were all armed, and in possession of the vestry, voting not only the money to be raised by rates, but the division of it among themselves ; decreeing what the price of all the farmer's products should be ; what wages should be paid to servants, and what pay to labourers. Under such a system of government I beg to ask, what security would remain for a single shilling in the pockets

pockets of those who are at present in a state of ease and competence? And whether such a state of tyranny would not be worse than that of the most determined despotism at present in Europe?

These facts are stated as having taken place in France; to say that they have every where taken place would be an exaggeration; but the *power* is, throughout the kingdom, *in the hands of the multitude*, and after knowing the use that has been made of that power, in so many striking instances, it may, in all truth of argument, be asked, whether the principle of such excesses be not admitted and professed the instant the power of a kingdom is lodged in any hands but those that have some property in it.

From what has all the abominations practising in France arisen? The question is answered in a few words: from the laws being submitted to the will, and the power being lodged in the hands of the Mob;—from those fine-spun speculations of the “Rights of Man” being carried into effect, on which the late transactions in France are the best comment, and the most satisfactory reply.

I revere the manly spirit and understanding to be found in my countrymen of the lowest order. Their generous hearts, I trust, would abhor the idea of imbruing their hands in the blood of women;—of cowardly butchering those unfortunate men who had it not in their power to resist*. That system of dastardly
assassination,

* The horrid transactions of the 2d and 3d of September are here adverted to: on which many of the Queen’s female attendants, and several thousand helpless and unresisting persons, were massacred, with circumstances of the most savage barbarity. The Princess de Lamballe, after having suffered every insult that a French mob could offer, and which decency forbids to enumerate, was at length beheaded. DURING TWO DAYS her mangled body was dragged through the streets of Paris! In fact, the shocking brutality which distinguished that period, will make French Liberty and French Humanity proverbially disgusting to the latest posterity.

When accounts of these enormities were read in the porter-houses in London, frequented by the lower order of the people, bursts of generous indignation, and abhorrence of French cruelty and cowardice, issued from the lips of the auditors, demonstrative of the English manly spirit, and which did honour both to their hearts and understandings.

affassination, which was suggested by the Jacobins in France would, I trust, meet with little encouragement in this country. But popular tyranny is a catching phrenzy, and the most dreadful disorders must ensue, where all the property of society is at the mercy of those who possess nothing. Attack and plunder will surely follow power in such hands. And I would live in Turkey rather than in England, if the wild and preposterous propositions founded on the "Rights of Man" were to become effective in this kingdom. In other words, I have property; but I do not choose to live where the first beggar I meet may, the sabre in one hand, and *Rights of Man* in the other, demand a share of that which a good government tells me is *my own*.

That there were many respectable men in this country who wished well to the constitution of France, as established in 1789, is not to be doubted, and these persons assert, with respect to the power being put in the hands of the people, so far would we have gone and no farther; but they forgot that by going so far they have given the power from their own hands, and have themselves made for outrage and disorder, an inlet, which they have no longer power to close. But if these men may be excused for an error in judgment, let it not for a moment be imagined that there is any thing respectable in the levellers, your idolators of the "Rights of Man," whose principle are not a jot better than those of highwaymen and housebreakers; for the object of both is EQUALIZING PROPERTY. The farmers should never forget, that the same principle which attacks a property of 10,000l. a year, because it is too large relatively to other properties, attacks also a farm of 200l. a year, for the same reason; nay of 50l. a year, because that also is large, when compared with the property of those who have little.

It is curious enough to compare the original *French declaration of Rights*, and the subsequent practice of the National Assembly. It is there asserted, *that no man can be accused, arrested, or detained, except in cases determined by the law, and according to the forms which the law has prescribed*. Such is the letter: what is the practice? On complaints from Niort, against some counter-revolutionists, seized by a mob thirsting for their blood, but who wished to have the flimsy cloak of a semblance of justice,

tice, the NATIONAL ASSEMBLY decreed, “ that all the criminal tribunals of the kingdom should try, without appeal, all crimes committed against the revolution.” And in order to indulge the same thirst at Paris, which was not with all its murders satiated, they decreed the removal of the criminals from Orleans to Paris; that is, from the legally established judicature, where there was a chance of justice, to an illegal one where there was no such chance; and they did this in consequence of the most brutal and insulting addresses from the deputation of the commons of Paris.

The declaration says, that *no man can be punished but in virtue of a law established, and promulgated prior to the offence, and legally applied.* But the NATIONAL ASSEMBLY decreed that disobedience to their orders, in the colonies, “ shall be regarded as high treason, and those who shall render themselves guilty shall be sent to France to be tried according to the rigour of the law.”

The liberty of the press was provided for in the declaration. Such the theory. The practice was, silencing all that were not *Jacobin* papers, and beheading the authors.

Pursue the declaration of rights through every article, and it will be found that there is not one, registered as an imprescriptible right of man, that has not been violated under circumstances of the most odious and abominable cruelty.

An Englishman is proud of the idea of his house being his castle; see the practice of *Jacobin* government in this respect:

Decreed, that the municipalities are authorized to search the houses of all persons for arms, and to take an account of horses and carriages applicable to the war.” And soon after their absolute seizure decreed. This was sounding the alarm bell in order to give up the houses of all the gentlemen in the kingdom to the plunder of an armed rabble; and this act of tyranny by the legislature itself.

If we are asked what apology the tyrants of Paris have to make for their actions, their answer is STATE EXPEDIENCY; which an English reformer calls the *offspring of hell*.

On whatever subject, science, or enquiry, practice is the only comment, there is no other test. When that prince of incendiaries

ries, PAINE, reviewing a train of his projects, asks with an air of triumph after each, *would not this be a good thing? This surely would be a good thing!* In like manner, taking up the French declaration of the "Rights of Man," there is hardly an article to be found, to which the same writer and a hundred others, would not annex the same question, *Is not this good? Can you deny this?* But when we come to estimate these trees of goodly appearance, by the fruit they have produced, we shall find—The right of resistance against oppression—*became the power to oppress.* The right to liberty—*crammed every prison on suspicion.* The right to security—*fixed it at the point of the pike.* The right to property—*was the signal of plunder.* And the right to life—*became the power to cut throats.* ARE THESE GOOD THINGS? If declarations of rights, and governments founded on them, are really good, the result must be good also. But OPPRESSION, PLUNDER, and ASSASSINATION, my brother farmers, are the good things in practice, that have flowed in a direct line from the good things of French theory.

A gentleman in his late publication, talks of *temperate reformation*, and of *pointing the zeal of the people to a moderate correction of grievances.* As if it was possible, after rousing, by inflammatory publications, the mobbish spirit, that you could draw the line of *moderation*, beyond which the populace should not pass? You want to correct grievances by means of *the people*; who, with power to effect the purpose, must have power to do much more. If they have that power, will they use it? GO TO PARIS FOR THE ANSWER.

Power in the hands of a MOB, hath ruined France. And the question in England is, whether the farmers and land proprietors shall preserve their property secure, by one and all considering the system with the horror it merits; or shall, by doubt and hesitation, unite with the enemies of public peace, and hazard all that we possess at present.

Give us our rights, is an expression which has been used with singular emphasis; the reply, once proper, was an abstract reasoning on the nature of those rights; we have now something much surer to direct our judgments; and can answer with strict
reference

reference to the facts that govern the question, "you have your rights;" you are in the possession of every right that is consistent with safety to the life and property of others.—To give you more will endanger both,—To give you *much* more will infallibly destroy them, and eventually yourselves. You have therefore, ALL your rights, for you have all that are consistent with your happiness; and those who ASSOCIATE to gain more, seek, by means which they know to be the high road to confusion, to seize what is NOT their right, at the expence of crimes similar to those that have destroyed one of the first kingdoms in the world.

There is in this country, and I glory in the recollection, a spirit of attention to the labouring part of the community, far beyond what is the case in any other kingdom in the world. The heart and the purse of the employer is never shut against the distresses of his industrious labourer. The liberality of the affluent hath, in every quarter, provided hospitals for the diseased in mind and body; schools for the ignorant and untutored; and bread for those who are not able to earn it themselves. The peasantry in England, when honest and industrious, are the happiest upon the face of the earth. And long may they continue so! But adieu to every thing like peace and pleasure, if once the levelling principles of Mr. PAINÉ become the object of their desire. Such a system, like a pestilential vapour, will bring disease, idleness, and discontent, with all their train of mischief along with it. Dissatisfied with his own condition, and envious of his neighbour's prosperity, the now industrious labourer would lose all those sweet consolations which flow from a consciousness of having done his duty, and from the assurance of receiving his reward. That happy state of honest contentment, which, in point of real happiness, leaves him little to regret in the condition of the first among mankind!

For the curse of these principles of equality is, that they never can allow tranquillity to be the inheritance of a people; supposing it possible for a country, infested with such doctrines, to be well governed, such good government will infallibly generate wealth and inequality; and by consequence the necessity

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of new civil wars and confusion to restore equality, which would for ever tend to variation. Thus, under such fine-spun principles, peace would never inhabit; tranquillity would be banished, even by the merits, supposing there were any, of the system; and new arrangements of property would be periodically to make, at the caprice and tyranny of those, who, possessing nothing, would look to confusion as their support, and to anarchy as their birth-right.

Traders and manufacturers of every description, although their sufferings in popular insurrections are generally very severe, can frequently convert their wealth into money, and fly with it on paper wings wherever property remains secure; but the farmer is chained to a spot. His property is invested in the soil he cultivates; he has no power of movement; he must abide the beating of the storm, be it pitiless as it may. To him therefore the new fangled doctrines of equality ought to appear in all their native deformity; for they are doctrines that tend directly to his destruction; and from whose pestilential influence he cannot fly.

I have given you a plain statement of facts at this time peculiarly interesting, as all engines are at work to make you fall in love with anarchy, turbulence, and sedition. I hope every one who has the spirit and understanding of a man, will set his face against those poisoners of the public mind, those insidious earwigs, who would creep into and corrupt what they cannot openly subdue. Let those who are fond of French politics and French government, transport themselves to France, like their friend PAINÉ, and there hatch their treasons against their native land. If they are fond of scenes of horror * and distress, they may there indulge their propensities to the utmost. A
thirst

* M. Louvet asserted in the National Assembly, and his assertion was not contradicted, that no less than 28,000 persons have been massacred, with scarcely the respite of a moment to commend their souls to heaven! Of these, much the greater part had no crime whatever laid to their charge: and to the rest, except a generous concern and attachment to the fallen fortunes and depressed condition of their King, little could be objected. Will it be believed, that such a wanton effusion of blood,—such a horrid prodigality of the lives of human creatures, should, among the republicans and levellers, find advocates, if not to commend, at least to palliate and excuse!!!

thirst of blood, at which savages would blush, and from which insulted humanity starts back appalled; their trade and manufactures annihilated; their agriculture cramped and fettered; honour, religion, and honesty trampled under foot. If for these, we are to dismiss our love to the King, our reverence for the Constitution and laws, our prosperity, liberty and happiness,—avert from Britons, oh! merciful heaven! the wretched infatuation. Teach them to know and to feel the genuineness of the blessings which distinguish this happy land. Free that land from the clamours of the seditious, the murmurs of the discontented, and the secret as well as open designs of wicked and unprincipled men. To this prayer, whoever has the love of his country warm at his heart, will fervently, and with all his spirit, say, Amen.

F I N I S.



